

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

FOR

**GAMING DEVICE HAVING MULTIPLE SELECTION GROUPS WITH
RANDOMLY ALIGNING ADVANCES**

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S P E C I F I C A T I O N

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

5 **"GAMING DEVICE HAVING MULTIPLE SELECTION GROUPS WITH
RANDOMLY ALIGNING ADVANCES"**

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application relates to the following co-pending commonly owned application: "GAMING DEVICE HAVING A BONUS SCHEME WITH
10 MULTIPLE SELECTION GROUPS," Serial No. 09/656,702, Attorney Docket No. 0112300-008, now U.S. Patent No. 6,439,995; "GAMING DEVICE HAVING A BONUS SCHEME WITH MULTIPLE SELECTION GROUPS," Serial No. 10/195,292, Attorney Docket No. 0112300-1011, now U.S. Patent No. 6,595,854 B2; "GAMING DEVICE HAVING A BONUS SCHEME
15 INCLUDING A PLURALITY OF SELECTION GROUPS WITH WIN-GROUP OUTCOMES," Serial No. 09/981,084, Attorney Docket No. 0112300-473; "GAMING DEVICE HAVING A BONUS SCHEME WITH MULTIPLE SELECTION GROUPS," Serial No. 10/243,047, Attorney Docket No. 0112300-1068; and "GAMING DEVICE HAVING A BONUS SCHEME WITH MULTIPLE
20 SELECTION GROUPS," Serial No. 10/623,421, Attorney Docket No. 0112300-1450.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates in general to a gaming device, and in particular to a gaming device having a game, such as a base or bonus game, with multiple selection groups that increase player excitement and enjoyment.

5 Gaming machines currently exist with bonus schemes in which the player has one or more opportunities to choose a particular selection or symbol from a group of symbols. When a player chooses a symbol, existing games will either award the player a bonus value or terminate the bonus round. The outcome depends upon the particular symbol selected by the
10 player.

In one existing game, when the player selects a masked symbol that awards a bonus value, the player receives the value and is provided with another chance to select another masked symbol. Each time the player selects an award symbol, the game provides the associated award and
15 prompts the player to make another selection. The player then selects another symbol and the process continues until the player selects a symbol that terminates the bonus round. When the player selects a masked end-bonus symbol, the game displays a message such as "COLLECT". That message indicates that the bonus round has terminated, and the player collects any
20 accrued values.

In the above type of game, the gaming device is programmed so that in each bonus round a certain number of symbols yield awards and a certain number of symbols end the game. The player selects value-associated outcomes from a finite number of selections until selecting an "end-bonus" 25 outcome. While that game offers advantages in player appeal and excitement, there is a continuing need to develop new types of bonus games, which further enhance the level of player interaction, excitement and enjoyment.

U.S. Patent No. 6,439,995, assigned to the assignee of the present invention, discloses a game ('the '995 game") having multiple selection groups, 30 wherein the player advances from one group to the next group when the player selects an advance symbol. That is, the player picks selections from a group until reaching an advance. In this game, the player wants to delay the pick of

the advances as much as possible to collect as many awards in the group as possible before receiving the advance. Unlike the first game, however, when the player picks the advance in '995 game the player proceeds to another selection group rather than to an end game outcome. While the '995 game is 5 entertaining for players, a need exists to develop new pick-until type games with multiple selection groups.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a game of a wagering gaming device 10 that can be implemented as a base or primary game or as a bonus or secondary game triggered by the base or primary game. The game includes a plurality of selection groups and an advance award or a final jackpot award. The game provides the player with a designated number of ~~picks~~ with which 15 the player uses to attempt to complete the selection groups to win the advance award or jackpot award. The number of picks in one embodiment is not enough to allow the player to pick: (i) once or (ii) more than once from every group. The game requires that a first advance or advance symbol be picked that yields or is aligned with or results in another advance or advance symbol 20 from a selection of a subsequent group for the player to reach the advance award or jackpot. That is, the player has to pick an advance symbol from a first group that yields automatically an advance or advance symbol from a second group, which does not consume an additional one of the player's picks in that subsequent group. The dual advances enable the player to proceed 25 through the second group (without consuming a second pick) to a third group or to the advance award or jackpot.

The present invention is played in one embodiment on a video monitor that operates in conjunction with a touch screen. The video monitor provides a screen that displays a number or plurality of selection groups. Those selection groups each contain a number or plurality of selections. The player picks one 30 of the selections by touching the area displaying the desired selection. The touch screen senses the player's touch and sends a discrete output to the

processor, which controls the gaming device, and which proceeds with the game according to the player's selection.

The gaming device is operable with any number of selection groups greater than or equal to two. In one embodiment, the gaming device provides 5 three selection groups. Each selection is in one embodiment related to a selection in an adjacent (e.g., subsequent) group. In one embodiment illustrated below, the selection groups are aligned in rows and columns. The rows delineate the groups and linking between the various selections. The 10 columns create the connection or relationships between selections of different groups. That is, each selection is related to the selection in the like column of the adjacent (previous or subsequent) group or row.

Using the example where three selection groups are provided, the gaming device in one embodiment provides the player with three picks. In one embodiment, the player can use all three picks in the selection groups and still 15 win an advance award or jackpot at the end by advancing through all three groups. In one alternative embodiment, one of those picks is required to collect an advance award or jackpot, leaving the player with two picks to advance through each of the three groups.

In one embodiment, if the player is fortunate enough to only select 20 advance symbols, the player reaches an advance award or jackpot award. However, if the player picks even one non-advance symbol, the game then requires the player to pick at least one advance symbol that is related to another selection in an adjacent group that also yields an advance symbol. When that happens, the game advances the player through the second group 25 without consuming a player pick and makes-up for the player's picks of the non-advance symbol. When two advances are aligned in the same column of separate groups of selections, and the player selects one of the advances, the second aligned advance is also revealed because it resides in the same column (i.e., it is associated with a related or linked selection).

30 Upon selecting aligned or related advances, the player advances from the first group, through the second group, to the third group. If the selection in the third group that is related to or aligned with the advance symbol in the

second group is likewise an advance symbol, the player advances through each of the three groups to the jackpot. It is therefore possible for the player to reach the advance award or jackpot after only one pick. Such a scenario requires that one column randomly draw all advances, and that the player 5 picks that column. It is therefore contemplated to provide the player alternatively with only a single pick or two picks (and perhaps stack the selection groups with more advances) and still provide the player with an opportunity to reach the advance award or jackpot.

In one embodiment, it is more likely that two advances will be aligned, 10 wherein the player has to use the second pick to find the advance in the third group. Or, the player needs two picks to advance to the second selection group and upon the third pick achieves two advances in a row to receive the jackpot.

In one embodiment, the player simply needs to reach the advance 15 award or jackpot award to win it. In another embodiment, the player needs one pick at the end for the advance award or jackpot award. For example, a group of advance awards or jackpot awards could be provided, wherein the player wins one or a number of the advance awards or jackpot awards based on the number of player picks remaining. If the player needs one pick at the 20 end, the provided number of picks can be adjusted accordingly.

When the player selects an advance and the related symbol in the adjacent group is not an advance, the gaming device operates in alternative ways. In one alternative embodiment, the gaming device automatically reveals 25 the related symbol regardless of whether the symbol is an advance symbol or not. For example, if the related symbol is an award symbol, the gaming device reveals that award symbol and provides the associated award to the player. The player not only receives that award, but the gaming device eliminates that selection from its associated group, increasing the player's odds of picking a selection that yields an advance. In an alternative embodiment, when the 30 adjacent related selection does not reveal an advance or advance symbol, the gaming device does not provide the award associated with the related symbol. Further, the gaming device does not reveal that symbol. In such a case, a new

player who has not yet learned that because the symbol is not revealed, the symbol is not an advance symbol, may be apt to select that related symbol.

The awards associated with the symbols of the different selection groups are selected randomly, e.g., from weighted or non-weighted tables in 5 one embodiment. Alternatively, the values are preset and consistent from game to game. The advance award or jackpot award can be likewise determined randomly or preset. If preset, the advance award or jackpot can be advertised by the gaming device.

In one embodiment, the awards increase in value as the player 10 proceeds through the selection groups. In that manner, it is advantageous to select as many advances as possible even if the player is unable to reach the advance award or jackpot award. That is, it is advantageous for the player to use as many picks as possible in one embodiment in a subsequent selection group rather than in a prior selection group.

15 In one embodiment, each of the selections yields an award for the player, regardless of whether the selection also yields an advance. Further, in one embodiment, the earlier selection groups have a higher percentage of advances than do later selection groups. It is therefore more difficult to receive randomly an advance in a later selection group.

20 As stated above, a single advance award or jackpot award is provided in one embodiment. In other embodiments, a selection group containing a single advance award or jackpot award is provided. Further alternatively, a selection group containing a plurality of advance awards or jackpot awards are provided. In those latter embodiments, the player uses one or more final picks 25 in hopes of achieving one or more advance awards or jackpot awards or the highest possible advance award or jackpot award.

The present invention also contemplates a number of other alternative embodiments. In one alternative embodiment, the player receives an additional award, e.g., a multiplier when the player advances through a 30 selection group without picking from that selection group. That is, when the player receives a second advance in a second group as a result of picking a first advance in a first group, so that the player never picks from the second

group, the player receives an extra bonus. The gaming device compensates for that loss of opportunity to pick from the second group by providing an extra bonus award, such as a multiplier. If the player skips through two groups, the gaming device can provide two multipliers or a higher valued multiplier.

5 In an additional alternative embodiment, the gaming device provides an extra bonus award in exchange for any picks that the player has remaining after receiving the jackpot award. For example, if the gaming device provides three total picks but the player only uses two picks to win the advance award or jackpot, the gaming device can award the player an extra credit or multiplier
10 10 amount. If the player has two picks remaining, the player receives two additional awards, e.g., two multipliers or receives one additional larger award or multiplier.

15 While the gaming device is described as providing the player with an overall number of picks to be used for all selection groups, the picks can alternatively be distributed on a per group or level basis, such as one or two picks per group. The number of picks can vary from group to group, e.g., decrease as the player advances through the groups. In this "resetting" embodiment, the picks for each group can be predetermined or randomly determined.

20 It is therefore an advantage of the present invention to provide a game with selection groups with alignable advances.

It is another advantage of the present invention to provide a game with a relatively high value advance or jackpot award.

25 It is a further advantage of the present invention to provide a wagering game that is fun and exciting to play.

Additional features and advantages of the present invention are described in, and will be apparent from, the following Detailed Description of the Invention and the figures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

Fig. 1A is a front perspective view of one embodiment of the gaming device of the present invention.

Fig. 1B is a front perspective view of another embodiment of the gaming device of the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a schematic block diagram of the electronic configuration of one embodiment of the gaming device of the present invention.

Fig. 3 is an elevation view of a first screen of one embodiment of the multiple selection group game of the present invention.

Fig. 4 is a second screen of the multiple selection group shown in Fig. 3.

Fig. 5 is a third screen of the multiple selection group game shown in Fig. 3.

Fig. 6 is a first screen of a replay of the multiple selection group game shown in Fig. 3.

Fig. 7 is a second screen of a replay of the multiple selection group game shown in Fig. 3.

Fig. 8 is a third screen of a replay of the multiple selection group game shown in Fig. 3.

Fig. 9 is an elevation view of an alternative multiple selection group game of the present invention.

Fig. 10 is an elevation view of a screen showing all of the selections and the jackpot revealed to show the relative percentages of advances in different selection groups in one embodiment of the game of the present invention.

Figs. 11, 12, 13 and 14 illustrate ways to relate selections of different selection groups that are alternative to the aligned row and column format of Figs. 3 to 10.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Gaming Device and Electronics

Referring now to the drawings, and in particular to Figs. 1A and 1B, gaming device 10a and gaming device 10b illustrate two possible cabinet styles and display arrangements and are collectively referred to herein as gaming device 10. The present invention includes the game (described below) being a stand alone game or a bonus or secondary game that coordinates with a base game. When the game of the present invention is a bonus game, gaming device 10 in one base game is a slot machine having the controls, displays and features of a conventional slot machine, wherein the player operates the gaming device while standing or sitting. Gaming device 10 also includes being a pub-style or table-top game (not shown), which a player operates while sitting.

The base games of the gaming device 10 include slot, poker, blackjack or keno, among others. The gaming device 10 also embodies any bonus triggering events, bonus games as well as any progressive game coordinating with these base games. The symbols and indicia used for any of the base, bonus and progressive games include mechanical, electrical or video symbols and indicia.

In a stand alone or a bonus embodiment, the gaming device 10 includes monetary input devices. Figs. 1A and 1B illustrate a coin slot 12 for coins or tokens and/or a payment acceptor 14 for cash, money. The payment acceptor 14 also includes other devices for accepting payment, such as readers or validators for credit cards, debit cards or smart cards, tickets, notes, etc. When a player inserts money in gaming device 10, a number of credits corresponding to the amount deposited is shown in a credit display 16. After depositing the appropriate amount of money, a player can begin the game by pulling arm 18 or pushing play button 20. Play button 20 can be any play activator used by the player which starts any game or sequence of events in the gaming device.

As shown in Figs. 1A and 1B, gaming device 10 also includes a bet display 22 and a bet one button 24. The player places a bet by pushing the

bet one button 24. The player can increase the bet by one credit each time the player pushes the bet one button 24. When the player pushes the bet one button 24, the number of credits shown in the credit display 16 decreases by one, and the number of credits shown in the bet display 22 increases by one.

5 A player may cash out by pushing a cash out button 26 to receive coins or tokens in the coin payout tray 28 or other forms of payment, such as an amount printed on a ticket or credited to a credit card, debit card or smart card. Well known ticket printing and card reading machines (not illustrated) are commercially available.

10 Gaming device 10 also includes one or more displays. The embodiment shown in Fig. 1A includes a central display 30, and the alternative embodiment shown in Fig. 1B includes a central display 30 as well as an upper display 32. The displays display any visual representation or exhibition, including but not limited to movement of physical objects such as mechanical reels and wheels, dynamic lighting and video images. The display includes any viewing surface such as glass, a video monitor or screen, a liquid crystal display or any other static or dynamic display mechanism. In a video poker, blackjack or other card gaming machine embodiment, the display includes displaying one or more cards. In a keno embodiment, the display includes displaying numbers.

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The slot machine base game of gaming device 10 displays a plurality of reels 34, preferably three to five reels 34, in mechanical or video form on one or more of the displays. Each reel 34 displays a plurality of indicia such as bells, hearts, fruits, numbers, letters, bars or other images which preferably correspond to a theme associated with the gaming device 10. If the reels 34 are in video form, the display displaying the video reels 34 is a video monitor. Each base game, especially in the slot machine base game of gaming device 10, includes speakers 36 for making sounds or playing music.

Referring now to Fig. 2, a general electronic configuration of the gaming device 10 for the stand alone and bonus embodiments described above preferably includes: a processor 38; a memory device 40 for storing program code or other data; a central display 30; an upper display 32; a sound card 42;

a plurality of speakers 36; and one or more input devices 44. The processor 38 is preferably a microprocessor or microcontroller-based platform which is capable of displaying images, symbols and other indicia such as images of people, characters, places, things and faces of cards. The memory device 40 5 includes random access memory (RAM) 46 for storing event data or other data generated or used during a particular game. The memory device 40 also includes read only memory (ROM) 48 for storing program code, which controls the gaming device 10 so that it plays a particular game in accordance with applicable game rules and pay tables.

10 As illustrated in Fig. 2, the player uses the input devices 44 to input signals into gaming device 10. In the slot machine base game, the input devices 44 include the pull arm 18, play button 20, the bet one button 24 and the cash out button 26. A touch screen 50 and touch screen controller 52 are connected to a video controller 54 and processor 38. The terms "computer" or 15 "controller" are used herein to refer collectively to the processor 38, the memory device 40, the sound card 42, the touch screen controller and the video controller 54.

20 In certain instances, it is preferable to use a touch screen 50 and an associated touch screen controller 52 instead of a conventional video monitor display. The touch screen enables a player to input decisions into the gaming device 10 by sending a discrete signal based on the area of the touch screen 50 that the player touches or presses. As further illustrated in Fig. 2, the processor 38 connects to the coin slot 12 or payment acceptor 14, whereby 25 the processor 38 requires a player to deposit a certain amount of money in to start the game.

It should be appreciated that although a processor 38 and memory device 40 are preferable implementations of the present invention, the present invention also includes being implemented via one or more application-specific integrated circuits (ASIC's), one or more hard-wired devices, or one or more 30 mechanical devices (collectively or alternatively referred to herein as a "processor"). Furthermore, although the processor 38 and memory device 40 preferably reside in each gaming device 10 unit, the present invention includes

providing some or all of their functions at a central location such as a network server for communication to a playing station such as over a local area network (LAN), wide area network (WAN), Internet connection, microwave link, and the like.

5 With reference to the slot machine base game of Figs. 1A and 1B, to operate the gaming device 10, the player inserts the appropriate amount of tokens or money in the coin slot 12 or the payment acceptor 14 and then pulls the arm 18 or pushes the play button 20. The reels 34 then begin to spin. Eventually, the reels 34 come to a stop. As long as the player has credits 10 remaining, the player can spin the reels 34 again. Depending upon where the reels 34 stop, the player may or may not win additional credits.

15 In addition to winning base game credits, the gaming device 10, including any of the base games disclosed above, also includes bonus games that give players the opportunity to win credits. The gaming device 10 preferably employs a video-based display 30 or 32 for the bonus games. The bonus games include a program that automatically begins when the player achieves a qualifying condition in the base game.

20 In the slot machine embodiment, the qualifying condition includes a particular symbol or symbol combination generated on a display. As illustrated in the five reel slot game shown in Figs. 1A and 1B, the qualifying condition includes the number seven appearing on, e.g., three adjacent reels 34 along a payline 56. It should be appreciated that the present invention includes one or more paylines, such as payline 56, wherein the paylines can be horizontal, diagonal or any combination thereof. An alternative scatter pay qualifying 25 condition includes the number seven appearing on, e.g., three adjacent reels 34 but not necessarily along a payline 56, appearing on any different set of reels 34 three times or appearing anywhere on the display the necessary number of times.

Game Play

30 Referring now to Figs. 3 to 5, one example of the multiple selection group game of the present invention is illustrated. Figs. 3 to 5 are each screen shots of one of the display devices 30 or 32 described above in connection

with gaming devices 10a and 10b of Figs. 1A and 1B. Each of Figs. 3 to 5 shows a different point in time of game play of one embodiment of the present invention. The game includes three groups of selections 62, 64 and 66. The group 62 includes selections 60a to 60f. The group 64 includes selections 60g to 60l. The group 66 includes selections 60m through 60r. In one embodiment, the selections are each areas of the video monitors 30 or 32 associated with a touch screen 50. When the player touches one of those areas, the processor 38 receives a discrete input from the touch screen 50, which signals that the player has picked a particular selection. In an alternative embodiment, the gaming device provides a plurality of electro-mechanical input devices 44 that enable the player to operate the game in a similar manner as with the touch screen 50.

Each of the selection groups 62 to 66 has an associated picks meter 68. Picks meter 68 tracks the number of picks the player makes in each group 62 to 66. A jackpot award 70 is shown below the selection groups 62 to 66. In the illustration that follows, the player picks sequentially from groups 62 to 66 with the goal of reaching jackpot award 70. Figs. 3 to 5 include a visual, audio or audiovisual message 82 to the player that the player needs to catch one or more falling stars all the way to the jackpot.

The screen shots of Figs. 3 to 5 also show a number of displays. The bet display 22 discussed above in connection with Figs. 1A and 1B is provided again on display device 30 or 32. The total bet display 22 for a slot machine shows the player's total wager, which includes the number of paylines wagered multiplied by the wager per payline. The display device 30 or 32 also includes a win display 72. Win display 72 shows the player's win after each pick of one of the displayed selections 60a to 60r. Display device 30 or 32 also includes a total win display 74. Total win display 74 accumulates the wins shown in win display 72. The player's credits are also shown on display device 30 or 32 via a second credit display 16. Display device 30 or 32 further displays a picks remaining display 76. The picks remaining display 76 shows the player how many remaining picks the player has.

The processor 38 operates to place award symbols and advance symbols behind each of the masked selections 60a to 60r. The generation or random generation takes place in one of a plurality of different ways. In one way, gaming device 10 randomly assigns award symbols and advances to 5 each of the selections 60a to 60r prior to any picks by the player. In another embodiment, gaming device 10 randomly assigns award symbols and advances to an order which the player picks. That is, the actual selection 60a to 60r that the player picks is not determinable, rather, the pick itself is randomly determined to be a particular award, an advance or an award in 10 combination with an advance symbol. In another embodiment, gaming device 10 randomly generates an outcome immediately after the player picks a selection. In any of the embodiments for randomly associating outcomes, suitable weighted probabilities can be used to determine whether the player receives an award, an advance, or an award in combination with an advance. 15 Still further alternatively, the awards are preset and the same for at least two consecutive plays of gaming device 10. The embodiments are each transparent to the player, making the game appear to be the same.

Fig. 3 illustrates that a first pick by player 78 is the selection 60c from the selection group 62. Prior to that pick, gaming device 10 can provide a 20 suitable audio, visual or audiovisual message telling the player to pick a selection from the first group 62. As illustrated, the selection 60c yields an award of five, but does not yield an advance symbol. The awards of the present invention can be in many different forms. In the illustrated embodiment, the award is a number of gaming device credits. Alternatively, 25 the award includes a multiplier of gaming device credits, such as a multiplier of the player's total bet, a component of the player's bet, the player's total number of credits, a win determined elsewhere in the game or other credit value. Otherwise, the award symbol can represent a number of picks from a prize pool, a number of free game spins, a number of free games, a non- 30 monetary award such as food or beverage or any combination thereof.

After the player picks selection 60c, picks meter 68 for the selection group 62 increments to show one pick has been made. The win display 72

shows the win of credits, which is totaled in display 74. The picks remaining indicator 76 in Fig. 3 is shown transitioning from three picks to two picks. That is, the player begins the game with three total picks in the illustrated embodiment. In an alternative embodiment, the player receives a number of 5 predetermined or randomly determined picks for each group 62 to 66, which can vary from group to group, e.g., decrease in subsequent groups. This “resetting” embodiment lets the player regroup and start over upon reaching a new level. After the pick of selection 60c, the player has two picks remaining. Because the player has not yet picked a selection yielding an advance symbol, 10 the player must still select from group 62. That is, if the player attempts to select from either group 64 or 66, gaming device 10 will not reveal that selection and can provide an audio, visual or audiovisual error message.

Fig. 4 illustrates that the player 78 next picks selection 60d. The pick of selection 60d reveals an award of ten and an advance symbol 80a. Advance 15 symbol 80a points downwardly towards the related symbol 60j of next or adjacent selection group 64. The advance symbol 80a also terminates the player’s picks in selection group 62. As illustrated, the pick of the advance symbol 80a is accompanied by an award of ten. In an alternative embodiment, the advance symbol is not accompanied by an award or is accompanied by a 20 different type of award from selections yielding only award symbols. In an alternative embodiment, one or more extra picks can be associated with advances or with one or more other selections. In a further alternative embodiment, one or more terminators that terminate the game or which reduce the number of picks in the game can be associated with one or more 25 selections. In one such embodiment, one or more anti-terminators or selections that add picks may be associated with one or more selections.

Returning to the illustrated game, the pick of the selection 60d causes a number of displays to update on display device 30 or 32. The picks meter 68 for selection group 62 increments to show the player has consumed two picks 30 in the selection group 62. The picks remaining indicator 76 is shown transitioning from two picks remaining to one pick. Win display 72 shows that the player has won ten credits via the pick of selection 60d, and display 74

shows an accumulated total win of fifteen credits. Fig. 4 continues to provide message 82 informing the player that the player needs to obtain the falling star or advance symbols to receive the jackpot award 70.

Referring now to Fig. 5, one embodiment for the result of an advance is illustrated. That is, the player receives the value of the award symbol indicated by or related to the advance 80a and the symbol that generated the advance, e.g., the symbol 60d of group 82. In the illustrated embodiment, the columns of symbols, e.g., symbols 60d, 60j and 60p are related. Also, the advance symbol 80a points to or indicates symbol 60j. The value or award associated with symbol 60d, thirty credits, is therefore revealed and provided to the player. In an alternative embodiment, the advance symbol 80a points or indicates, e.g., randomly, to a symbol of group 64 that is provided automatically to the player. For example, gaming device 10 could randomly decide between symbols 60i, 60j and 60k, which are diagonally or directly adjacent to advance symbol 80a.

Because the value thirty associated with symbol 60j, revealed automatically by advance 80a, is not itself an advance symbol, player 78 must now pick from group 64 until picking an advance or until exhausting all picks. However, because the thirty value of symbol 60j is revealed and removed from possibility, the player's chances of picking an advance symbol in group 64 are increased. As illustrated, the player has to use the third of three total picks in group 64, requiring the player to "hit" or generate two advances in a row to reach jackpot award 70. As stated above, in an alternative embodiment the player's picks are reset or are replenished upon reaching the new group 64.

As seen in Fig. 5, gaming device 10 provides a suitable audio, visual or audiovisual message informing the player to now pick from selection group 64. Accordingly, player 78 picks the selection 60h. That selection is revealed to show that the player wins an award of twenty and also receives an advance symbol 80b. Picks meter 68 for the selection group 64 increments to show that one pick has been consumed in that selection group. The overall picks display 76 indicates that the player's last pick has been consumed (one pick to zero picks) and that the player does not have any remaining picks.

In the example of the game of Figs. 3 to 5, the player is not able to obtain a jackpot award 70 at least in part because the selection 60j of group 64, which is related spatially to the selection 60d of group 62, does not yield an advance symbol and because the symbol 60n reveals only a credit or award 5 value and not additionally an advance symbol. As shown in more detail below, if selection 60j yields an advance symbol, the player passes through group 64 automatically without consuming one of the player's picks. Instead, because selection 60j does not yield an advance symbol, the player is forced to use the last of the player's selections in group 64. Because that last selection 60n 10 does not produce an advance symbol, the player does not receive jackpot 70.

In an alternative embodiment, gaming device 10 does not, in the above example, reveal or award the player the award associated with selection 60j. Here, the player could still attempt to pick selection 60j. In that alternative embodiment, however, gaming device 10 would reveal an advance symbol 15 associated with selection 60j and provide any associated award to the player.

Various embodiments exist for when the player selects an advance on the final pick. In the illustrated embodiment, gaming device 10 does reveal the related symbol or value of the subsequent group 66, namely, the symbol associated with selection 60n, which in the illustrated embodiment is one 20 hundred, as shown in win display 72, and which is in the same column as selection 60h and advance symbol 80b. The player's overall award is therefore one hundred sixty-five as illustrated in total win display 74. Alternatively, gaming device 10 does not reveal and provide the one-hundred 25 award associated with the selection 60n of selection group 66. That award is not provided to the player, yielding a total win of only sixty-five or thirty-five as seen alternatively in total win display 74, depending upon whether the player 30 also receives the thirty value associated with selection 60j.

In the game of Figs. 3 to 5, if the selection 60n of group 66, which is related to the selection 60h of group 64, instead yields additionally an advance 35 symbol, the player wins the jackpot award 70 because the player does not need an additional pick to achieve the jackpot award 70. In an alternative embodiment, such as when multiple jackpot awards 70 are provided, the

player may be required to have a pick remaining to win such one or more jackpot awards. In that alternative scenario, if the player is forced to use the player's the final pick in one of the groups 62 to 66, the player cannot win jackpot award 70.

5 In Figs. 3 to 5, the selections of the groups 62 to 66 are related via the spatial relationship between symbols of like columns. That is, each symbol is related to at least one other symbol of the same column. As illustrated below in Figs. 11 to 14, the selections 60a to 60r can be related in other suitable ways. Those relationships can be predetermined or randomly determined in
10 accordance with the present invention. Further, as discussed above, the advance symbol alternatively indicates, points to or otherwise designates the symbol of another group to reveal, wherein that pointed to, indicated or designated symbol is not necessarily a related symbol. The non-related symbol can be chosen randomly from a sub-set of the symbol's associated
15 group or from the entire group.

Referring now to Figs. 6 to 8, another example of the game of the present invention is illustrated. The player wins the jackpot award in this example. Figs. 6 to 8 include each of the components described above including the selection groups 62 to 66 having the selections 60a through 60r.
20 Each group 62 to 66 is associated with a picks meter 68. As before, the player plays the game of Figs. 6 to 8 hoping to navigate through groups 62 to 66 to win the jackpot 70.

In Figs. 6 to 8, the display device 30 or 32 provides the displays described above including the credit meter 16, the total bet display 22, the win
25 display 72, the total win display 74, and the picks remaining indicator 76. The screen shots also include message 82 informing the player that advances are needed to win the jackpot award 70. Gaming device 10 provides suitable audio, visual or audiovisual messages to the player at various times throughout the sequence shown in Figs. 6 to 8 to guide the player and inform
30 the player of the selection groups 62 to 66 from which the player should pick.

In Fig. 6, the player 78 picks the selection 60d from group 62, which yields the award of ten and the advance symbol 80a. Because the related

symbol (or otherwise indicated or designated symbol) 60j of group 64 is associated with advance 80b, gaming device 10 reveals the award of fifty and advance 80b associated with selection 60j. The player's pick of selection 60d also advances the player from selection group 62, through selection group 64 5 and to selection group 66. The player consumes only one pick, which is shown in pick meter 68 associated with group 62. Picks remaining display 76 shows a change from three picks to two. Notably, the picks meter 68 associated with selection group 64 does not increment even though the award fifty and advance symbol 80b associated with selection 60j is revealed and 10 provided to the player.

The win meter 72 and the total win display 74 shows that the player achieves a total win of two hundred ten credits with the single pick of selection 60d, which includes the combination of the award ten from selection 60d, the award fifty from the automatically revealed selection 60j and the award one 15 hundred fifty from the automatically revealed selection 60p (obtained via reveal 80b). In the illustrated embodiment, the awards are added together. In alternative embodiments, one or more of the awards can be a multiplier, wherein the awards are multiplied. Further, in certain embodiments the player can be awarded an extra bonus, e.g., a multiplier or credit value for the group, 20 e.g., group 64, that was passed-over by the multiple or aligned advances 80 (referring collectively to advances 80a, 80b, etc.) Further alternatively, because selection 60p does not yield an advance, the selection is alternatively not revealed and the player begins with a fresh group 66 of selections with none revealed.

25 The selection 60p of group 66, which is the symbol of group 66 related to selection 60j of group 64, is not associated with an advance symbol. As discussed above, gaming device 10 may or may not upon activating the advance 80b reveal and/or provide an award symbol (if one exists) associated with selection 60p. In the illustrated embodiment, gaming device 10 does not 30 reveal and provide the award associated with selection 60p.

Fig. 7 illustrates that the player 78 is able to pick any of the remaining selections 60m to 60o, 60q and 60r of group 66. The player 78 picks the

selection 60m, which yields the award of one hundred plus an advance symbol 80c. The picks meter 68 associated with group 66 increments to one, and the player's remaining picks shown in picks remaining display 76 decreases from two to one. The player's additional win of one hundred is shown in win meter 5 72 and the player's total win increases to three hundred ten as shown in win display 74.

Because the player has advanced through each of the groups 62 to 66, the player wins the jackpot award as shown in Fig 8. Fig. 8 illustrates that the player wins the jackpot award '70, which is revealed to be a prize of five 10 thousand. The picks remaining display 76 remains at one pick. The player's current win shown in win meter 72 is increased to 5100, and the player's total win of five thousand three hundred ten is shown in the total win display 74. The example shown in Figs. 6 to 8, like the example shown in Figs. 3 to 5, does not require the player have one pick with which to select the jackpot 15 award 70. Alternatively as shown below, the player may be required to have a pick remaining to win the jackpot, e.g., to pick one jackpot from a plurality of jackpots 70. The player in Fig. 8 has one pick left as shown in meter 76. In one alternative embodiment, gaming device 10 enables the player to receive an extra bonus or multiplier for the leftover pick.

20 Referring now to Fig. 9, an alternative embodiment of the multiple selection group game of the present invention is illustrated. The illustrated embodiment includes each of the components described above, including the selection groups 62 to 66 and the meters or indicators, such as the picks meter 68, total bet display 22, credit display 16, win display 72 and total bonus win 25 display 74.

In the embodiment of Fig. 9, the player does need to have a pick at the end to select one of the jackpot awards 70a to 70c. The player may therefore be provided originally with additional one or more picks with which to reach the jackpot awards 70a to 70c. If the player reaches the jackpot awards, the 30 player needs and uses a pick to receive one of the awards. A message 84 accordingly informs the player that the player needs a pick to reach the jackpot awards 70a to 70c.

As illustrated, player 78 picks the selection 60d that yields the award of ten and the advance symbol 80a. Because the related or indicated symbol 60j of group 64 is associated with advance 80b, gaming device 10 automatically reveals and provides the award of fifty and the advance 80b to the player.

5 Further, because the related or indicated selection 60p of group 66 is associated with the advance 80c, gaming device 10 reveals and provides the award of one hundred and the advance symbol 80c associated with selection 60p to the player.

As seen in Fig. 9, the player's single pick, as indicated by the picks 10 meter 68 associated with group 62 display 76, advances the player all the way to the jackpot awards 70a to 70c. The player 78 uses the second pick to pick jackpot award 70b from jackpots 70a to 70c. Jackpot award 70b is revealed to be five thousand, wherein the player's win and total win is five thousand one hundred sixty credits as seen in both the win and total win displays 72 and 74, 15 respectively. The player may again receive an extra bonus, e.g., a multiplier for one or both of: (i) skipping over rows 64 and 66 without a pick and (ii) having a pick left over. Alternatively, gaming device 10 enables the player to use the last pick on one of the remaining jackpots 70a or 70c. The bonus for skipping groups 64 and 66 can be increased or doubled because two rows are 20 skipped.

Referring now to Fig. 10, display device 30 or 32 illustrates each of the 25 selections of groups 62 to 66 in a revealed form. Fig. 10 illustrates one embodiment for setting the probability of the player achieving or receiving an advance symbol in any particular selection group. In one preferred embodiment, the later the selection group, the harder it is to receive an advance symbol. Accordingly, selection group 62 includes three advance symbols 80a to 80c. Selection group 64 includes two advance symbols 80d and 80e. Final selection group 66 includes only a single advance symbol 80f. The percentage loading of advance symbols 80 in groups 62 to 66 can change 30 according to a desired game mathematics and can be generated randomly from weighted or non-weighted ranges of numbers of advance symbols 80.

It should be appreciated from Fig. 10 that the player has to be fortunate in picking selections that yield advance symbols in order to win the jackpot award 70. The player may have to be fortunate enough that the game aligns or indicates at least two advance symbols in adjacent or related positions 5 between two adjacent or related groups of selections. Again, although Fig. 10 illustrates a total of six advances, the gaming device is operable to provide any suitable random or predetermined percentage and distribution of advance symbols.

Fig. 10 also shows that the awards increase on average in advancing 10 groups. The player, whether reading jackpot 70 or not wants to make more picks from later groups. The values are also either preset or determined randomly from weighted or non-weighted pools.

Referring now to Figs. 11 to 14, various screen displays of video monitor 30 or 32 show different embodiments for relating or associating 15 different selections of different groups. That is, up until now, the selections have been indicated by the advance symbol 80 or related by residing in the same column as other selections of different groups, which are separated into rows. Alternatively, the groups are organized into columns, wherein the selections are related by being in the same row as the selection of another 20 group. Fig. 11 shows a further alternative embodiment, wherein selections are related via paths 172 and 174. Fig. 11 illustrates three selection groups 162 to 166, wherein group 162 includes selections 60a to 60f. Group 164 includes 25 selections 60g to 60l. Group 66 includes selections 60m to 60r. Each of the selections 60a to 60f is related to or linked with one of the selections 60g to 60l of group 164 via a visual link 172. Likewise, each of the selections 60g to 60l of group 164 is related or linked to one of the selections 60m to 60r of group 166 via a path or link 174.

The paths can have a variety of different shapes and lengths. It should be appreciated therefore that related symbols do not have to be aligned but 30 can be placed anywhere on the display device 30 and 32 and be linked via a path.

Fig. 11 also shows multiple jackpots as in Fig. 9. Here, the jackpot award is set forth as a group 170 of jackpot awards 170a to 170c. Grouping the jackpot awards provides flexibility to the game designer to accomplish a number of gaming device features. The group 170 operates with the 5 embodiment described above, wherein the player needs at least one pick at the end to achieve a jackpot award. In one embodiment, only one of or less than all of awards 170a to 170c is actually a high value award relative to the awards of the groups 162 to 166. Here, the player needs to be fortunate once again to pick the highest award. In another embodiment, each of the awards 10 170a to 170c is a relatively high value award, wherein the player desires to pick the highest of each of the high value awards.

As seen above, it is possible for the player to reach the jackpot award group 170 with two picks remaining. In an embodiment, gaming device 10 enables the player to use both picks to select jackpot awards. In another 15 alternative embodiment, the gaming device does not require a player pick for the jackpot award 170 and instead generates one and only one or less than all the awards 170a to 170c.

Fig. 12 illustrates a different embodiment for relating selections of different selection groups. Here, three selection groups 262, 264 and 266 are 20 displayed. Selection group 262 includes selections 60a to 60f. Selection group 264 includes selections 60g to 60l. Selection group 266 includes selections 60m to 60r. As illustrated, the selections are related by an overall shape of a selection. That is, selection 60a is related to selection 60a, which in turn is related to selection 60m, each of which are rectangles. Selection 60d 25 is related to selection 60j, which in turn is related to selection 60p, each of which are stars. The player makes a visual connection between selections of different groups and understands the operation of gaming device 10 of the present invention via the shapes of the selections in different groups.

Referring now to Fig. 13, display device 30 or 32 displays three 30 alternative selection groups 362 to 366. The groups each contain the selections 60a to 60r as described above. Here, gaming device 10 provides related but not the same indicia. Selection 60a is related to selection 60g,

which in turn is related to selection 60m, each of which display the letter "A". Likewise, selection 60f is related to selection 60l, which in turn is related to selection 60r, each of which display the letter "F". Even though selection group 364 includes an additional letter with respect to group 362 and group 5 366 includes an additional letter with respect to group 364, the player is able to associate selections of different groups and thereby understand gaming device 10 of the present invention.

Referring now to Fig. 14, a further alternative embodiment is displayed. Here, the selections of different groups 462 to 466 are related by an amount of 10 an item. That is, selection 60a is related to selection 60g, which in turn is related to selection 60m, each of which contain only one of a particular item. On the other hand, selection 60e is related to selection 60k, which in turn is related to selection 60q, each of which include five of a particular item.

Figs. 12 to 15 illustrate certain examples of a myriad of ways to relate or 15 associate selections of different groups with one another. Other ways include symbols or indicia, such as selections related by color, selections related by hatching, selections by size or image or via any combination of the above-described embodiments.

In a further alternative embodiment, gaming device 10 does not visually 20 link related selections from different groups. Instead, gaming device 10 selects randomly a selection from the next group when the player receives an advance symbol in a previous group. Here, gaming device 10 preferably reveals the award or award and advance of the randomly selected selection in the subsequent group. In that way, the player knows what has happened 25 when the player receives an advance symbol in the previous group. If the randomly selected symbol from the next group is likewise an advance symbol, gaming device 10 then randomly picks a selection from the next designated selection group. It should be appreciated that additional outcomes, such as awards, can be associated with the alignment of two or more advances.

30 In an alternative embodiment, the group which contains the advance, jackpot, target or best award or outcome can have just that outcome or have a plurality of selections with one or more selections having such outcomes. That

enables the game designer to vary the odds of achieving such outcome in any desirable manner. That also enables the game to include more advances in the groups so that it is more likely that the player gets to the final group, which is more exciting for the player.

5 It should also be appreciated that in addition to or instead of the number of picks provided to the player, the selection game of the present invention can include one or more terminators associated with the selections, which function to end the game.

10 It should be understood that various changes and modifications to the presently preferred embodiments described herein will be apparent to those skilled in the art. Such changes and modifications can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention and without diminishing its intended advantages. It is therefore intended that such changes and modifications be covered by the appended claims.